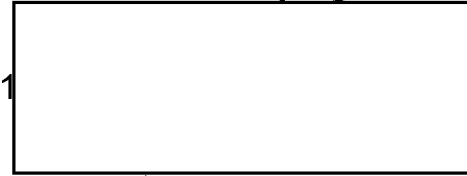


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Dept. review completed

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Light contact continues to characterize Operation JUNCTION CITY, the allied multibattalion drive through War Zone "C." Viet Cong documents captured in late 1966 in Hau Nghia Province indicate Communist concern over successful civic action programs in that province.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Only light contact with Communist forces was reported over the weekend by the multibattalion Operation JUNCTION CITY sweeping northern Tay Ninh Province (Paras. 1-3). A total of 45 Communists were killed as the result of a nine-hour battle in Pleiku Province (Para. 4). In an encounter with Viet Cong soldiers in Binh Duong Province 25 Americans were killed and 23 wounded on 26 February (Para. 5). Ten enemy soldiers were killed by US Marines of DECK HOUSE VI in southeastern Quang Ngai Province (Para. 6). Ten Communist soldiers were killed and several weapons captured by US Marines, currently participating in Operation CHINOOK in northern Thua Thien Province (Para. 7). Recently captured Viet Cong documents reveal the Communists' concern over allied civic action in Hau Nghia Province (Paras. 9-12).

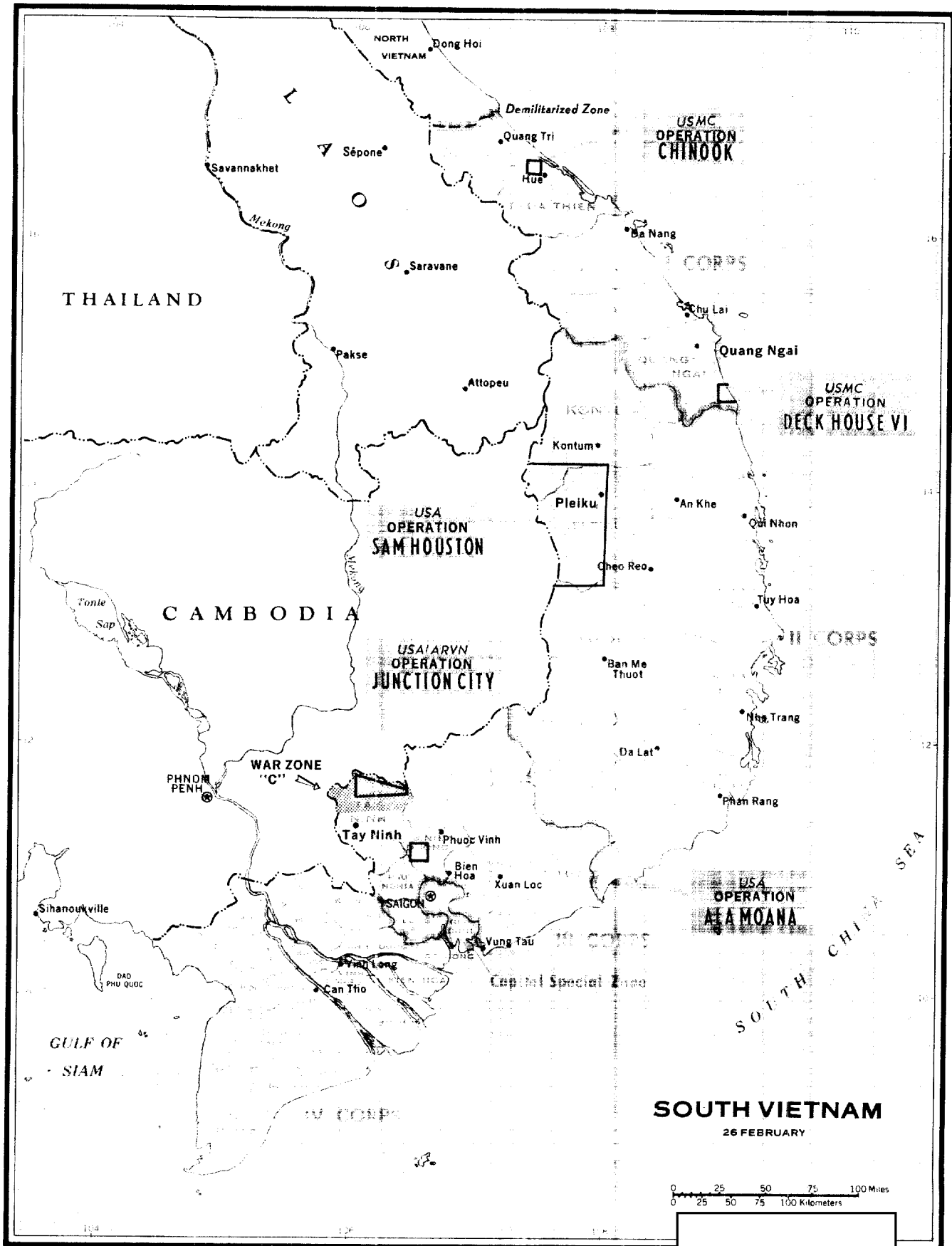
II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Constituent Assembly moved ahead with its debate and completed work on the chapter dealing with the executive (Paras. 1-3). Differences of opinion still remain to be settled between the Directorate and the Constituent Assembly over the relative powers of the executive and the legislative branches (Para. 4). Work was started on the chapter of the constitution dealing with the judiciary (Para. 5).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There
is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US and South Vietnamese troops of the multi-battalion drive through Communist War Zone "C"--Operation JUNCTION CITY--reported only sporadic contact with enemy forces over the weekend, mostly from Viet Cong snipers trying to slow the US advance. As the result of a small engagement about 27 miles north of Tay Ninh city on 26 February, one American was killed and nine others wounded. Enemy losses in this encounter are unknown.

2. On 25 February, US troops uncovered a Viet Cong base camp of at least regimental size which may have been part of the defense complex of the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), one of the main objectives of the operation. Captured documents indicated the recent presence of the 272nd Viet Cong Regiment, the unit which usually protects COSVN, in the area.

3. Although enemy casualties are not high--a total of 61 killed to date--this sweep of northern Tay Ninh Province is expected to uncover important intelligence material and destroy major Viet Cong base areas and installations. Enemy losses also include the destruction of more than 150 bunkers and several tunnels and the seizure of large quantities of rice and military equipment. American losses since this operation began on 21 February now stand at 23 killed and 117 wounded.

4. A company of the US 4th Infantry Division participating in Operation SAM HOUSTON in the central highlands of Pleiku and Kontum provinces was attacked by an enemy force of undetermined size while patrolling an area about 40 miles west of Pleiku town. The American company was supported by artillery and air fire and was later reinforced with another company of US infantrymen. Before the enemy force withdrew, nearly nine hours later, a total of 45 Communists were killed. In contrast, American losses were reported as one killed and 28 wounded.

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5. One US Army company and a South Vietnamese Army platoon patrolling an area about 18 miles northwest of Saigon engaged an enemy force of unknown size early on 26 February. As a result, a total of 44 Viet Cong were reported killed. The friendly units, participating in the search-and-destroy Operation ALA MOANA in Binh Duong Province, suffered casualties of 25 killed and 23 wounded. US artillery and tactical air strikes supported the friendly forces during this engagement.

6. In the US Marine Operation DECK HOUSE VI, presently being conducted in the coastal lowlands of southeastern Quang Ngai Province, a US combat patrol platoon was fired upon by an unknown number of enemy soldiers on 25 February. The fire was returned and two other combat patrols joined forces in an effort to trap the enemy. One American was killed and two wounded. Ten enemy soldiers were killed.

7. Elements of the two-battalion US Marine search-and-destroy Operation CHINOOK currently sweeping northern Thua Thien Province reported encountering a 12-man enemy force on 25 February. As a result of the American ambush, ten of the Communists were killed and three individual and two crew-served weapons, 20 Chinese Communist grenades, and nearly 800 rounds of small-arms ammunition were captured. One American was wounded during the skirmish.

8. Early on 24 February, a South Vietnamese Army field position five miles southeast of Quang Ngai city in coastal Quang Ngai Province was attacked by an estimated company-size enemy force. During the ensuing battle, a total of five South Vietnamese were killed, 12 wounded, and 12 missing. Communist casualties were reported as nine killed.

Viet Cong Complaints About Successful Allied Civic Action in Hau Nghia Province

9. Three recently captured Viet Cong documents from Duc Hue District, Hau Nghia Province, dating from late October and early November 1966, have

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revealed that the Communists are concerned about the effectiveness of allied civic action in the district and the departure of large numbers of people from the district's Viet Cong - controlled areas.

10. One of the documents spoke of medical treatment given by "the enemy, including Americans," and complained that the local populace seemed to appreciate the treatment. Many people even openly compared allied medical aid with that provided by Viet Cong village civil health teams, concluding that allied treatment was far better.

11. In a second document, the Viet Cong complained that the allies had "succeeded in influencing" the people through civic action. Many villagers came away with the impression that "the Americans are lovable." The third document, which discussed coming rice production requirements for Viet Cong-controlled areas of Duc Hue, disclosed that 50 percent of the population of these areas had left for government areas. Of these, ten percent had settled permanently in the "enemy areas," while the remainder traveled frequently between the two areas.

12. The Americans referred to in the documents are probably elements of the US 25th Infantry Division, who have been stationed in Hau Nghia for approximately a year and have been assisting in pacification work in the province. More territory and more of the population have come under government control and local inhabitants have shown increasing willingness to provide information on the Viet Cong.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Constituent Assembly pushed ahead with its activities during the period 23-25 February, although there was only one full day's session during this period.

2. At the Thursday meeting, a letter from the Military Directorate was circulated which outlined its views on recently approved chapters of the draft constitution dealing with executive powers. Some of the proposals in the letter were acted on by the assembly, but others have yet to be discussed. One proposal of the Directorate, to establish a high military and defense council, in the interests of improving civil-military cooperation, was deferred until debate begins on the advisory councils section of the proposed constitution.

3. Also on Thursday, a sub-chapter dealing with local administration was debated and several articles passed. This action completed work on the executive chapter of the proposed constitution. Among the articles approved were those that designated the heads of executive agencies of local government and defined the deliberative bodies of local administrative units. At the village level, it was decided that village chiefs may be elected from among the members of the elected village council. This was a concession to the Directorate which had pointed out that it was often the village chief who was the prime target of Communist terror and if he was to be elected by the general population, elections would be continuous in some areas. The members of all other deliberative bodies will be directly elected by secret ballot. Province chiefs would be elected, according to the provisions of this sub-chapter, although this is a point to which the Directorate still objects. The embassy reports that a compromise is possible permitting a president to appoint province chiefs during his first term.

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4. The Constituent Assembly and the Directorate also still disagree on the effect of a non-confidence vote of the assembly on a reorganization of all or part of the government. The embassy believes that the assembly will stand firm and that the Directorate ought not to make an issue of this matter.

5. On 24 and 25 February, debate began on a few of the articles dealing with the judiciary. The concept of a supreme court was approved, and several articles were passed dealing with the responsibilities of judges and prosecuting judges (i.e., public prosecutors).

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